

## Component II: Community Types of Greatest Conservation Need

*“This is a high-leverage strategy to address the conservation concerns of whole ecological communities or species groupings. Implementing conservation strategies at this level will comprehensively benefit many fish and wildlife species.”*

Fish and wildlife communities have not been formally defined for Montana’s complex biological systems. For this strategy, landscape characteristics, vegetative cover type, and associated fish and wildlife species were linked in order to begin describing community types. Future efforts to provide complete classifications of Montana’s fish and wildlife communities will be critical for implementing this strategy and monitoring conservation success.

Conservation at the community level provides the potential to leverage conservation resources to benefit large numbers of species. Community types also provide a way to associate numerous species through common habitat requirements. These communities of plants and animals often face similar conservation concerns that can be addressed simultaneously. In the focus area component of this strategy, geographic areas were identified that offer some of the greatest potential to conserve the community types and species in greatest need of conservation. The following community types have been identified as Tier I (in greatest need of conservation, with a status of low or declining), and efforts to conserve them should not be limited to the focus areas identified in Component I. Efforts should be made to address the conservation strategies identified for these community types across the state regardless of where they occur. Tables 3 and 4 list the different communities and their evaluated tiers based on Montana GAP analysis coverages.